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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: SPECIAL MEDIA REACTION: AMERICA AND IRAN

¶1. SUMMARY: Local media perceives an increase in volume and stridency toward Iran by both Israel and the U.S., though alleged causes vary: "Al-Ittihad" accuses PM Ehud Olmert of rattling sabers to divert attention from corruption charges; "Gulf News" suggests that Israel wants to push a confrontation now, fearing that a Democratic President would give them less leeway. "Akhbar Al-Arab" suggests that Israel and the U.S. have jointly decided to raise tensions. Some voices note that Israeli and U.S. actions and intentions aside, Iran is less than fully trustworthy and Arab states are not sufficiently organized or vocal in making their voices and opinions heard. End summary.

¶2. Under the headline "Striking Iran to save Olmert", Egyptian professor Dr. Ibrahim Al-Bahrawi, wrote 06/08 in Abu Dhabi-based Arabic semi-official daily "Al-Ittihad" (circulation 65,000):

"Olmert sees, in the Iranian nuclear issue, salvation from the political quagmire of his corruption. He believes that if he appears to save America and Israel from an Iranian nuclear threat, American Jews, especially AIPAC, might pardon him."

¶3. Under the headline "Obama and the region", Kuwaiti professor Dr. Shamlan Yousef Al-Eissa, wrote 06/08 "Al-Ittihad":

"What is Obama's perspective on the Middle East? The U.S. commitment to Israel's security will not change, so the Democrat is no different from the Republican on Israel. Obama's position regarding Iran is less clear; at the start of his election campaign he called for...negotiating with Iranian leaders on many controversial issues; after securing his party's nomination, he [has called for a more] complicated diplomatic [engagement] with Iranian leaders based on whether it will further the interests of the United States."

¶4. Under the headline "Peace is indivisible", the 06/08 editorial in Abu Dhabi-based Arabic daily "Akhbar Al-Arab" (circulation 20,000) read:

"It seems that peace in Washington has died after Olmert concluded Israeli-American negotiations at the AIPAC conference.... Obviously, the region is preparing for a war.... It is high time for Arab nations to pressure their governments and stake out their positions."

¶5. Under the headline "Israel wants to make war while the sun shines", the 06/08 editorial in Dubai-based English daily Gulf News (circulation 100,000) read:

"Israel is becoming increasingly aggressive toward Iran. Perhaps they [are weighing] the possibility of a Democratic President who has said that there should be talks with Iran, against an incumbent who has threatened action against Iran, despite being unable to get [support for this from] any nation other than Israel."

¶6. Under the headline "Arab-Iranian talks", a UAE writer Mohammed Al-Hammadi, wrote 06/11 "Al-Ittihad":

"Before engaging in Arab-Iranian talks, we need inter-Arab talks to sort out Arab issues and challenges. It would be a great historic achievement for the Arab League to bring Tehran into talks with Arab countries, but this will be as difficult as holding Arab-Israeli talks. Why? Because the counterpart [Iran] is never ready to talk about peace."

¶7. Under the headline "Dark Iranian accounts", UAE writer Mohammed Khalfan Al-Sawafi, wrote 06/11 "Al-Ittihad":

"Iranian political actions sometimes shock us. When they ask us stand by them against American pressure on Iran, they forget how much they have been provoking the UAE regarding the three occupied islands for more than three decades. They call it just a misunderstanding and refuse to discuss this important issue. Iran

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ought to stop opposing the UAE; its economy would 'breathe' only through the UAE's lungs if international sanctions were imposed against Iran. If Iran were to [try to] force the UAE into war, the UAE would refrain. The Iranians know this, but at the same time they don't reciprocate the UAE's peaceful and neighborly relations."

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